Sex, Markets, and Power
Political Science 427
Spring 2016

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Office Hours: Monday 1:30-2:30
and by appointment

Course Description: This course considers how women’s socio-economic status and political power have varied across time (in historical perspective) and place (in Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas). We will employ three analytical lenses to help us interpret what we see: biology, markets, and power. These lenses will help us understand how issues specific to women relate to debates in mainstream political economy. How does the sex with which you were born matter, and why? How do different forms of economic production affect the distribution of resources between men and women? What generates and sustains power structures that are relatively patriarchal or matriarchal or mixed? How independent is the political sphere from cultural and economic ones? We will examine a range of substantive issues that concern women in a wide range of societies to gauge which kinds of explanations are the most persuasive.

Course Requirements
For regular credit:
1. 1 short paper (about 5 pages long) that grapples with a topic of your interest related to this course, or that puts forward a policy proposal for adoption by the U.S. government. The paper is due on the last day of class. 30% of your grade.
2. In-class one-hour mid term. 30% of your grade.
3. Final exam. 40% of your grade.

For Writing Intensive credit (WR): Write three short papers (5 pages, 20% each for a total of 60%; topics to be determined in consultation with me) in lieu of the midterm and one short paper; and take the final exam (40%). The final is still required for Writing Intensive credit.

Course Schedule and Readings:

PART I: Theoretical Lenses

Class 1. Introduction: Sex, Markets, and Power

Class 2. Why Sex Matters
Q: What is the strongest case for the argument that biology matters for human behavior? What is the strongest case you can make that it does not?

• Melvin Konner. 2015. Women After All. Introduction, Chapter 5.
Class 3. Markets and Bargains
Q: What is good about economic division of labor? How much can it explain? What are the costs, and who bears them? How should we evaluate the costs and benefits?


Class 4. Power
Q: What does it mean to be politically powerful? How can women achieve political power?


PART II: Substantive Issues

Class 5. Sex and Society: Mate Choice
Q. What can we learn about ourselves by knowing more about hunter-gatherers?


Class 6. Gender Discrimination
Q: When are girls valued less than boys?


Class 7. Sex and Society: Social Norms
Q: What accounts for the similarities across cultures in sexual stereotyping and gender roles? What accounts for the differences? How does it matter for women seeking equality?


Class 8. Women and Development
Q: Is economic development good or bad for women? What is the case on both sides?

- World Bank. 2015. “Gender Inequality and Growth: The Case of Rich vs. Poor Countries.”
Class 9. Women and Democratization

**Q:** Does democratization improve the lot of women? Are female voters’ preferences different from males’?


Class 10. Female Political Representation

**Q:** Why are women underrepresented in formal political institutions? What difference does it make?


Class 11. Policy Consequences of the Female Vote

**Q:** Where does the gender voting gap come from? What are its effects?


Class 12. The Women’s Rights Movement in the U.S.

**Q:** How far have women gotten? Has the meaning of “feminism” changed?


Class 13. Women and the Labor Market

**Q:** Where does gender wage inequality come from? What can be done about it? Evaluate the consequences of different solutions.


Class 14: Midterm Exam, in class

Class 15. Marriage and Family Structure

**Q:** Generations of feminists, inspired by the work of Friedrich Engels, have viewed marriage as a woman’s ball and chain. Evaluate this claim.

Class 16. Parenting

Q: How, why, and to what extent does sex affect parenting style? Does it matter?


Class 17. Gender, Race, and Class

Q: How do blacks experience gender differently from whites? How do gender, race, and class affect experiences and shape identities? What are the consequences for “the female vote”?


Class 18. Gender and the Global Economy

Q: How does global economic integration affect women and men differently?


Class 19. Abortion

Q: What accounts for the changes in direction and the variation in political heat surrounding abortion? Fathers’ rights?


Class 20. Pornography

Q: Should pornography be treated as free speech or a form of sexual oppression?


Class 21. Sex Trade

Q: Does the illegalization of prostitution help or hurt women? How do we know?

Class 22. Women and War
Q: Would female political leaders be less warlike?


Class 23. Sex on Campus
Q: What do men want? What do women want? What do they get? How can people avoid a “rape culture”?
- In class discussion

Class 24. Discrimination by Industry
Q: What are the patterns of female employment and earnings by industry?

Class 25. Policy Interventions: What Works?
Q: Do we need quotas? Subsidized childcare? Workplace rules? Paycheck-division? How well would these interventions work? Would society accept them?

Class 26. Men in a Gender Equal World
Q: How would the world look if it were gender-equal? What would happen to men?

Class 27. Sex, Markets, and Power: Do They Mix?
Q: Do women need to balance family and career? Do men? Devise a set of government policies to achieve your goals and evaluate their distributional consequences.